



A Brief History of Progressive Education with Dr. Jason Edwards

Lesson 5: The Progressive Revolution in American Education

Outline:

“Thirst was made for water; inquiry for truth.”

C.S. Lewis

“Ninety-nine [students] out of a hundred are automata, careful to walk in prescribed paths, careful to follow the prescribed custom. This is not an accident but the result of substantial education, which, scientifically defined, is the subsumption of the individual.”

William Torrey Harris, *The Philosophy of Education*

“The efficient man is the man who thinks for himself.”

Charles Eliot

“All mental and moral development is by self-activity. Education is the economizing of self-effort in the direction of all-sided development.”

Francis Parker

“The primary use of knowledge is for such guidance of conduct under all circumstances as shall make living complete. All other uses of knowledge are secondary.”

Herbert Spencer

The “Liberal Reformers”

- Herbert Spencer
 - Coined the phrase, “survival of the fittest”
 - Thought that the essential information that needed to be taught in school was science and practical information; what needs to be known is “useful” information.
 - Did not want government running education.
- Francis Parker
 - Established the “Quincy system” (1875), which involved manual and vocational training.
 - Thought that learning should be done in groups and that it should be tailored to the child’s interest
- Joseph Mayer Rice
 - Thought that American schools were failing and made it his career to fix them; he saw progressivism as a movement
- William Torrey Harris



- He was the U.S. Commissioner of Education between 1889 and 1906.
- He developed the first comprehensive system of public kindergarten (a system of education that revolved around Romanticism).
- He emphasized the “common” element of education (everyone gets the same information as the basis for a shared knowledge).
- Charles Eliot
 - He advocated for a “scientific approach” to education.
 - He became Harvard University’s president in 1869.
 - He brings the elective system to Harvard University.
 - He was the chair of the Committee of Ten (an organization, set up by the National Education Association, essentially establishing the progressive aim of standardizing the school system in the U.S.).